

The Slate

Vol. XXX Issue I

Spring 2025

The Principal's Office Rochelle Balkam, President

Here in mid-winter, it is sometimes difficult to think about the year ahead. But we are looking forward to an exciting year with new challenges and new opportunities. A unique site has been selected for the 2025 fall conference.

The **Manchester Historical Society** will host the event in partnership with Bob and Sandy Morrice. The Morrice farm features the **Sharon Township** one-room school, which Bob has lovingly restored over the years, a log cabin, a carpenter shop, a blacksmith forge and several other out buildings. The schoolhouse and the log cabin will serve as meeting sites for the conference. Bob's "collection" of vintage buildings reminds me of our late MORSA president, Tom Johnson's "collection" of vintage cars.

The downtown home of the historical society includes a second floor one-room school classroom created by Sue LaRocque, former elementary school teacher. The society provides tours for local students as well as the general public in what was formerly a funeral home for many years. Programs are offered, including on such topics as architecture, historic crafts and a concert series at the historic Blacksmith Shop. The website offers a unique program called "Deconstructing the Past," a

step by step glimpse which shows how a house built in the 1860s is taken apart bit by bit, with every part salvaged if possible and ultimately, reassembled. The land is now part of the Legacy Land Conservancy.



Put Saturday, September 13, on your calendar for MORSA's Conference. The fall Slate will have more details, as will our website Miorsa.org

One-room School Athletes Compete in a District-Wide Track Meet by Carol Sue Brodbeck

Seeley School was a one room country schoolhouse located on the corner of Yankee and Clark Roads in the Township of Whiteford, Monroe County, in Ottawa Lake, Michigan.

Early in the spring of 1955, we heard that we were going to consolidate. We had no idea what consolidate meant but our teacher, Mrs. Mary Wahl, said that many little schools like ours in the district were going to come together and create a large school. Shortly thereafter, we were invited to compete in a district track meet. We had no idea what a track meet was so Mrs. Wahl began teaching us what it was and how we could participate. We were all interested in participating.

There were dashes, relays, broad jumping, high jumping, pole vaulting, basketball throwing, and shotput to name a few. We knew about playing softball and dashes, but all the others were foreign to us. We started reading about each of these sports in our World Book Encyclopedia and our baseball captains became responsible for assembling our “athletic” gear.

For high jump and pole vaulting, two 4X4-inch upright poles were installed in the hard clay soil. Each had a series of spikes protruding on which another piece of lumber was supported and moved up or down on the spikes to achieve the desired height. For pole vaulting, the equipment team brought in a cane pole which had been used to deliver their new rug. For broad jumping, wood shavings on the ground helped to measure the distance our “athlete” jumped. For the relays, dashes and throws, the lawn was marked off at various lengths. The equipment boys took their mother’s kitchen scale out to their rock pile to find that perfect round rock of the correct weight for our shotput. Eventually, they found it, painted it black and brought it to school. They proudly displayed it with a little sign, “Shotput.” Having all the equipment, the try-outs began.

One of our more “stout” girls broke the cane pole when vaulting. She was fine, but the boys were very upset—where would they possibly find another, but they did. Our track team, all girls, continued honing their athletic prowess.

Finally, the day arrived, and the Seeley team proudly arrived wearing their new navy shorts and white tops. Upon registering, each athlete received a paper numbered card to pin on their top and directed to the correct competition areas. We were in for a big surprise. Girls were not allowed to participate in the boys’ contests: pole vaulting, high jumping, broad jumping, and shotput throwing. We sat on the ground and watched the boys from the other schools compete. We asked what mattresses were doing on the ground. We learned that these athletic mats were used to soften a jumper’s fall so they would not be hurt. I recall that our pole vaulter remarked how much higher she could have gone if she had a metal pole, and she would not have had to worry about breaking a bone.

I have often wondered what the other athletes thought of the “hicks” from Seeley School. I do not recall how well our team did and it did not matter because we learned and competed. We finished out the year at our dear Seeley knowing that the fall school year would be vastly different, but we did not know what to really expect. We went home for the summer and did the typical summer things-- visiting friends and relatives, playing, working in the fields and garden, fishing or simply gazing at the white fluffy cloud formations in the bright blue sky with birds and katydids chirping.

Historical Society's Marchido School wins state award

From the Mason County Press

VANDALIA, Cass County — The Mason County Historical Society was recently awarded the **Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse of the Year Award at the 2024 Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association Annual Conference**. The honor highlights the rich history and careful preservation of the **Marchido School** now located at Mason County Historical Society's Historic White Pine Village.

Marchido School was part of Pere Marquette Township School District No. 1. It was built in 1894 on the southeast corner of Bronson and Hesslund roads, providing education to children in grades kindergarten through eight. In 1956, the Marchido School district was annexed to the Ludington Area School District. The building was moved across the road in the back of the new building, Pleasant View Elementary, and was used as an activity building.

In September 1973, the building was donated to the Mason County Historical Society by LASD. It was then moved to the newly developed Pioneer Village, which opened on July 4, 1976.

Pioneer Village's name was later changed to Historic White Pine Village.

The schoolhouse was restored with furnishings and details such as a 44-star flag from 1890, kerosene lamps, and desks of varying sizes, reflecting the time when one teacher instructed students of all ages in a single room.

"We are deeply honored to receive this award. The **Marchido School** is more than just a building—it's a window into the educational experiences of children before the era of school consolidation," said Rebecca Berringer, executive director of the Mason County Historical Society.

"We are proud to preserve this important piece of history, and we are grateful to the Michigan

One-Room Schoolhouse Association for their dedication to recognizing these important landmarks across the state.

"The Marchido School offers visitors an authentic look into education from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From the traditional recitation benches and Palmer Method penmanship lessons to the beloved Christmas programs and community gatherings that took place in the school, it reflects an era where one-room schools were the heart of education in rural communities."

In addition to being a popular exhibit at Historic White Pine Village, the Marchido School provides hands-on educational experiences to students from across west Michigan. During programs, such as the spring and fall History in Action Days, children have the opportunity to step back in time and experience what it was like to attend a one-room schoolhouse, making history come to life in an immersive, interactive way. The experience is typically led by a volunteer retired teacher.

The Mason County Historical Society is a non-profit charitable 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 1937. While at one time the Society was supported by a local tax millage, it has operated autonomously, without taxpayer support, for over 30 years. Its mission is to preserve and present Mason County's rich history, inspiring visitors to appreciate and engage with their heritage. The Society owns and operates Historic White Pine Village in Pere Marquette Township, the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum in Ludington and the Mason County Research Center.



Bellingham School by Connie Lukins Kandell

I moved from Kalamazoo to Plainwell when I was five years old in 1953. We lived one quarter of a mile from the **Bellingham Country Schoolhouse**, but other students walked miles to school in all kinds of weather.

It was a one room school with a small entryway and two cloakrooms/bath-rooms; girls on the left and boys on the right. There was a total of 25 students and one teacher. The size of each grade varied, with two boys and me in kindergarten and only one girl in 6th grade.

We had a very good teacher in Mrs. Haskins; she was strict but kind. She would call one class at a time to the front of the room for each subject. She faced the students and “kept an eye” on the rest of us while that class had their backs to us. The rest of us had plenty of work to do at our desks but I liked to “eaves-drop” learning from their class. I kept my head down, of course.

We went outside to play three times each day; two recesses and one lunch time. We brought our lunch from home, but the milkman delivered our individual, small bottles of milk daily to accompany lunch. We played softball and red rover as well as enjoying the playground equipment.

I have fond memories of Mrs. Haskins playing piano for all of us while we sang. Another good memory was of us all going on the bus with our teacher for a day at the **Allegan County Fair** each year.

The schools consolidated at the beginning of third grade for me. For the first half of the school year, I was fortunate to stay at Bellingham with third graders from the other country schools in the area and Mrs. Haskins as our teacher. I remember vividly the day in January when we moved by bus to the new

Starr School in **Plainwell**.

My brother, David, is a year younger than me and attended kindergarten and first grade at Bellingham, moving to Bridge Street School in second grade. He too has fond memories of Bellingham School and Mrs. Haskins. We both value the education we received there.



Bellingham School Students

On July 14, 2024, the **Salem Area Historical Society (SAHS)** dedicated its Historical Marker Plaza, with a replica Tower for the former School Bell, to all of the students, teachers, parents and administrators of the South Salem Stone School District #3, and to John Dickerson and all of the settlers who infused this wilderness with the Spirit of Salem.

The State of Michigan Historical Marker is a double-sided marker with one side honoring the **South Salem Stone School** (1857) and the other side honoring the Dickerson Barn (1830). Under mostly cloudy skies, the dedication began with the ringing of the school bell in the Bell Tower.



**Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association
Tom Johnson One-Room Schoolhouse of the Year Award Application**

Section 1— Ownership

Date _____

Schoolhouse Owner (s) Address _____
Name of School _____
Address of School _____
Nominated by/Contact Person: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail _____

Section 2—The Schoolhouse

1. Date of construction and builder, if known: _____
2. Type of construction _____
3. Years used as a school _____
4. After closure, how was the building used? _____
5. Outline any structural/architectural changes from the original to present _____

Section 3—History of the School and its Restoration

1. Please write a short history of the schoolhouse, including any features that distinguish it from other schools.
2. Discuss the restoration of the schoolhouse and how it's used at present.
Has it been moved from its original location? If so, to what location?
3. To which specific time period is the schoolhouse restored? _____
4. Please attach at least two interior and four exterior photos.
5. Is the building open to the public? Does it serve an educational function?

Please send the completed application to: Rochelle Balkam
222 Wildwood Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: 734-668-6294
Email: Balkamhp@gmail.com

Deadline is August 1, 2025

The award will be given only to schools that have not been converted to other uses, such as homes or places of business. These criteria have been adapted with permission from the Country School Association of America. Thank you.

Manchester Welcomes MORSA

The setting for the Fall MORSA conference is Manchester, Michigan, located on the banks of the River Raisin. The community was founded by early settlers attracted by the abundance of waterpower to run mills. In the 21st century, the village is home to residents who enjoy a slower life pace, but appreciate the proximity to the cultural benefits, employment opportunities, good healthcare and the positive aspects of nearby universities.

The conference will be held at 2 sites; downtown at the Kingsley-Jenter House, home to the museum and at the Mottice farm, just outside of town on Scio-Church Road. The president of MORSA will welcome guests at the coffee hour and introduce the guest speaker.

September 13, 2025 Conference

A tour of the Mottice farm, lunch and the awarding of the Tom Johnson "Schoolhouse of the Year Award" will follow. The audience will have time to share their interest in one-room schools and what brings them to the conference. This networking is a crucial part of the conference.

Interested in preserving One-Room Schoolhouses and their legacy? Please consider joining our Board of Directors. We are always looking for good people.

Three's the Charm

by Rochelle Balkam

The Bonine House, in Vandalia, Michigan served as the meeting place for a unique collaboration at the annual **Michigan One-room Schoolhouse Association** on October 5, 2024.

The Michigan One-room Schoolhouse Association (MORSA), the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County, (URSCC) and the Michigan Oral History Association, (MOHA) met to learn the stories of the Freedom Seekers and those who served as conductors on the UGRR. The stories passed from one generation to those that followed. Because of the secret nature of the UGRR, oral tradition has kept that history alive. The keynote speaker, Jim Cameron, from the MOHA, enlightened the audience with “how-to” guidelines for conducting an oral history project.

MOHA’s mission is to provide for effective cooperation and communication among persons, programs and institutions concerned with the techniques, uses and promotion of oral history in Michigan. MOHA serves people who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas. Time is of the essence, to secure the individual memories.



The landmark Bonine House, its carriage house, and the Brownsville School are crucial to the story of Michigan’s underground railroad in Cass County and preserve the legacy of the Freedom Seekers. The URSCC won the Historical Society of Michigan 2024 Award for Local History.



Quakers in southwest Michigan provided refuge and opportunity to those escaping slavery. Education was an integral part of that commitment. A school was established to aid in the education of the children in the area, including many children of color. Thus was the birth of Brownsville One-room School. Built in the 1850s, it served the community until 1957.

Brownsville School’s foundation has been replaced and the walls shored up.



The Brownsville School was one of Michigan's first integrated schools. URSCC has decided to not add desks to the restored schoolhouse, but to let the floors and walls tell their stories.



Attendees at the Conference agreed that the walls did indeed speak. Soon there will be a documentary, including oral histories of former pupils, also available for visitors to view and listen to, in the school.

2025 CSAA Conference will be June 8-10 in Huntington, WV
by Myrna Grove

Country School Association of America (CSAA) is celebrating a 20-year milestone, and you are invited to the festivities. Plans are underway to celebrate at the 2025 Annual CSAA Conference to be held June 8-10 at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia.

With the theme, “Country Schools on Country Roads”, attendees will have the opportunity to not only focus on early education and historic preservation, but also experience Appalachian heritage, industries, crafts and cuisine.

Marshall University is a public research university, founded in 1837 and named after John Marshall, the fourth Chief Justice of the United States who served from 1801 to 1835.

The 2025 CSAA conference will have an all-new three-day format, beginning on Sunday, June 8. On the first day, Marshall University will host tours of the campus and library. The tour also includes Center School, the 1888 wood-frame schoolhouse moved to campus in 1995.

A Sunday evening dinner will include the keynote address along with CSAA’s annual business meeting. Various awards are announced such as Preservation Grants and Artistry and Scholarship Awards.

Monday, June 9 is a full day of presentations by educators, scholars, preservationists, and practitioners. A range of topics covers early school themes, innovative practices, museum experiences, restoration and research. Monday evening’s entertainment will be regional music provided by the Stony Point String Band.

Tuesday, June 10 is the Annual Coach Tour

for all registered attendees. The tour includes country schools and historic sites reflecting the 3-Rs of historic preservation which are Restoration, Recreation, and Repurpose.

The tour culminates at Heritage Farm Museum and Village with an opportunity to tour the open-air museum, visit exhibits and view the early 20th century Lick Creek School. To conclude the day, an evening dinner and theatrical performance is scheduled.

Information about registration/housing for this unique conference will begin in March on the CSAA website which is country-schools.org/2025-west-virginia.html. Mark your calendars now for June 8-10, 2025 to make connections with other one-room school enthusiasts.



Presentation of the Tom Johnson Schoolhouse of the Year award for 2024 to Rebecca Berringer of the Marchido School in the Historic White Pine Village, Ludington, by MORSA President Rochelle Balkam . Congratulations!

If you know of a one-room school, with no commercial ties, that that you would like to nominate for the annual award, please fill out the application above or online. More info will be online later and in the fall Slate.

NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION



Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association
 c/o Jane Johnson
 4815 Barton Rd.
 Williamston, MI 48895

Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2025 Dues

- \$25 Member
- \$20 Senior or Student
- Donation (Thank you)
- Total**

Name of Member: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____

Email: _____

Please make check payable to MORSA and mail to:
 Jane S. Johnson, 4815 Barton Road, Williamston, MI 48895